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COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Twenty-first session

SUMMARY RECORD (PARTIAL)* OF THE 532nd MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Monday, 17 May 1999, at 10.30 a.m.

Temporary Chairperson: Mr. RABAH

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* No summary record was prepared for the rest of the meeting (closed).

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The meeting was called to order at 10.35 a.m.

OPENING OF THE SESSION

1. The TEMPORARY CHAIRPERSON declared open the twenty-first session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

2. Mr. AGUILAR URBINA (Chief, Support Services Branch, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights) extended a warm welcome to the Committee on the occasion of the opening of its twenty-first session, and congratulated the members of the Committee who had been newly elected or re-elected at the seventh meeting of States parties to the Convention. He assured all members of the Secretariat's firm resolve to assist the Committee in carrying out its duties; in that connection, two new professional staff members had joined the High Commissioner's Plan of Action team.

3. He thanked Mr. Fulci for his participation in the teleconference recently held by the Bureaux of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the Commission on Human Rights. At that conference, Mr. Fulci had drawn attention to issues of crucial importance to both the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the other human rights treaty bodies. That was particularly significant because the Commission on Human Rights did not have a history of according high priority to matters concerning the treaty bodies.

4. The forthcoming commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child would provide an opportunity to review and strengthen the child rights dimension in all human rights mechanisms. At its recently concluded fifty-fifth session, the Commission on Human Rights had devoted a special meeting to an interactive dialogue on the rights of the child, which had contributed to a better understanding of the human rights implications of the marginalization and exclusion of children, and to identifying ways in which the Commission and other human rights bodies could act to protect the most vulnerable groups of children. The Chairperson of the fifty-fifth session had expressed the wish to meet the Committee for an exchange of views on that subject. The Commission had adopted a number of resolutions relevant to the rights of the child, details of which had been included in the Committee's files for the current session. In July, ECOSOC would hold a special ceremony to celebrate the tenth anniversary. In addition, the Office of the High Commissioner planned to hold a two-day meeting during the Committee's twenty-second session in order to highlight achievements and challenges in the implementation of the Convention and identify ways of introducing improvements.

5. Members would be aware that the International Labour Conference, currently under way, would be considering a draft ILO convention aimed at prohibiting and eliminating the worst forms of child labour. In March 1999, the Commission on the Status of Women had adopted an Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which contained communication and inquiry procedures. Meanwhile the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, at its recently concluded session, had discussed draft general comments on the right to education.

6. The Committee had been invited to participate in a workshop on gender mainstreaming for special rapporteurs and chairpersons of treaty bodies,

scheduled to be held from 26 to 28 May 1998. In the context of the eleventh meeting of persons chairing the human rights treaty bodies, which would take place from 31 May to 4 June 1999, a joint session would be organized on 2 June with participants in the sixth meeting of special rapporteurs/ representatives/experts and chairpersons of working groups of the special procedures system of the Commission on Human Rights and of the advisory services programme.

7. Finally, two independent experts, Ms. Anne Bayefsky and Mr. Christof Heyns, were conducting a study of the treaty bodies with a view to providing the High Commissioner with a thorough analysis of the workings of the treaty system; Ms. Bayevsky had requested a meeting with the Committee to discuss her work.

8. Mrs. SARDENBERG, observing that membership rotation was an essential principle in the composition of United Nations bodies, welcomed the new members and expressed her hope that the Committee would continue to work together as a team. She also welcomed the new members of the staff, and requested further information regarding plans for the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the Convention. Finally, she applauded the Commission on the Status of Women for adopting the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which was a major new development. In her view, renewed consideration should be given to the matter of the girl child, particularly since a conference scheduled for the following year would be reviewing the results of the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (item 1 of the provisional agenda) (CRC/C/85)

9. The provisional agenda (CRC/C/85) was adopted.

SOLEMN DECLARATION BY THE NEWLY ELECTED MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE (agenda item 2)

10. The TEMPORARY CHAIRPERSON invited the members newly elected at the seventh meeting of States parties to make the solemn declaration provided for in rule 15 of the provisional rules of procedure.

11. He said that Mrs. Karp and Mrs. Ouedraogo, who had been re-elected at the seventh meeting of States parties and who were unable to attend the current meeting, would make the declaration at the morning meeting of the following day.

12. Mr. DOEK, Mrs. EL-GUINDI and Mrs. TIGERSTEDT-TÄHTELÄ made the following declaration: "I solemnly declare that I will perform my duties and exercise my powers as a member of the Committee on the Rights of the Child honourably, faithfully, impartially and conscientiously."

ELECTION OF THE OFFICERS OF THE COMMITTEE (agenda item 3)

13. The TEMPORARY CHAIRPERSON said that, at the request of one member, the Committee would elect the officers of the Committee at the morning meeting of the following day.

SUBMISSION OF REPORTS BY STATES PARTIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLE 44 OF THE CONVENTION (agenda item 5)

14. Mr. DAVID (Secretary of the Committee) said that since the previous session, two initial reports had been received, those of Côte d'Ivoire and Bhutan, and three periodic reports, those of Chile, Tunisia and Belgium. To date, a total of 156 reports had been submitted, 133 initial reports and 23 periodic reports; of those, the Committee had thus far considered 98. Fifty-seven initial reports and 100 periodic reports were overdue.

The discussion covered in the summary record ended at 11 a.m.